



Region 10  
Outreach and Community Relations  
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Seattle, Washington 98101

Alaska  
Idaho  
Oregon  
Washington

March 30, 1999

## Bertrand Creek Properties Site Investigation Lynden, Washington

*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has completed an investigation of the source of pesticide contamination of groundwater in the Bertrand Creek area. The Site Investigation report is now available. This fact sheet summarizes the report.*

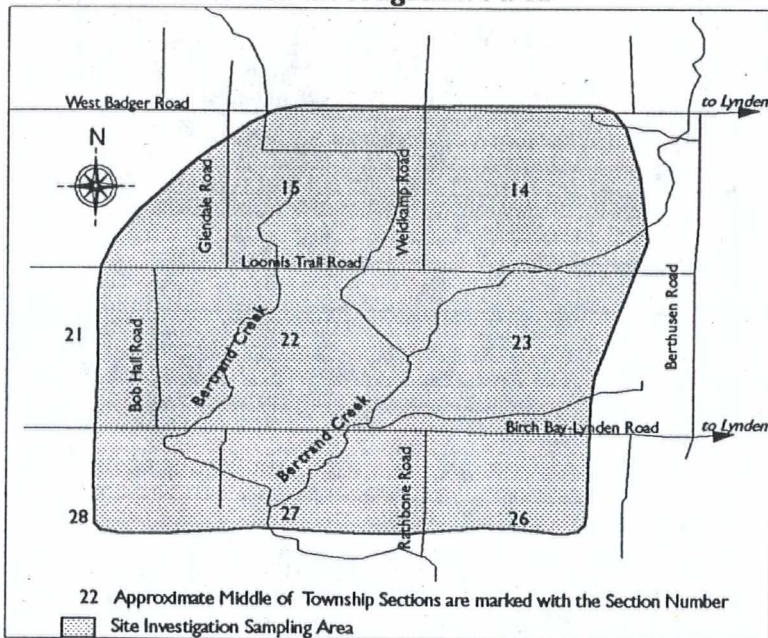
### What was the history and purpose of the EPA Site Investigation?

EPA was petitioned in February 1998 to conduct an assessment of the Bertrand Creek area. The petition was submitted by citizens concerned about the source of 1,2-dibromoethane (EDB) and 1,2-dichloropropane (DCP) contamination in drinking water from wells in

and sediments was necessary. A total of 283 samples were collected in August and September of 1998 as follows:

- 157 from Groundwater
- 92 from Subsurface Soil
- 17 from Bertrand Creek Water
- 17 from Bertrand Creek Sediments

### Bertrand Creek Site Investigation Area



the area. The Federal Superfund Law (CERCLA) provides for citizens to request assessments by petitioning EPA. The petition cited allegations of potential illegal dumping of pesticides in and near Bertrand Creek.

After reviewing historical and scientific information about the contamination and allegations, EPA concluded that field sampling of soils, groundwater, surface water

Most samples were taken in township sections Bertrand Creek flows through -- 14, 21, 22, 23 and 27.

The samples were analyzed for many potential contaminants including EDB and DCP, the primary contaminants of concern. Nitrate, a common groundwater contaminant that is very prevalent in the area was not evaluated in the EPA investigation. However nitrate contamination levels in wells in the area has been well established through other testing efforts.

### What does the Site Investigation Report Conclude?

- DCP is more widespread than any other contaminants analyzed. 30 of the 84 locations where groundwater samples were taken (36%) found DCP above the EPA drinking water maximum contaminant level (MCL).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The MCL is used for comparison purposes. These samples were NOT taken from drinking water wells and do not indicate the level of DCP or EDB in drinking water in any particular well.



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- Two of the 84 locations where groundwater samples were taken (1%) found EDB contamination above the EPA drinking water MCL.
- No evidence of illegal dumping or burial of pesticides or pesticide containers was found in the areas investigated during the field work.
- The groundwater contamination at this site could have been caused by the agricultural application of pesticides on fields.
- None of the substances analyzed for were found in surface water and sediment samples collected along Bertrand Creek.
- People may be exposed to these contaminants through ingestion, inhalation and/or contact with contaminated groundwater.

### What Happens Now?

EPA's primary objective for conducting the site assessment, to investigate the allegations of illegal dumping or disposal of pesticides, has been completed.

However EPA remains involved by working with the state and local agencies that are leading the effort to establish additional measures and programs to ensure that all residents in the area have a safe water supply.

EPA is coordinating with these agencies who are working in the area:

- Whatcom County Health
- Washington Department of Health
- Washington Department of Ecology
- the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry
- the US Geological Survey.

### Measures You Can take to Reduce Your Exposure If You Have 1,2-DCP or EDB in Your Well Water

#### For Drinking and Cooking Water

If 1,2-DCP or EDB are above the Drinking Water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) in your water you should use a different uncontaminated water supply, such as bottled water, for drinking and cooking. Households with these contaminants above the MCL in the Bertrand Creek area are eligible to receive bottled water through a program administered by the Washington Department of Ecology. Please call Mary O'Herron in Bellingham, 360/738-6246 for more information on the bottled water program.

#### When Showering

If you have 1,2-DCP or EDB in your water, especially above the MCL, Whatcom County Health Officials recommend that you take the following steps while showering:

- Install and maintain a carbon filter on your showerhead (they can be bought at most hardware or water treatment stores).
- Turn on an exhaust fan or open windows in the bathroom while showering.
- Reduce the amount of water flowing through the showerhead.
- Reduce the time spent in the shower.

A recent study aimed at finding ways to reduce levels of 1,2-DCP in bathroom air from showering found that these measures lowered the 1,2-DCP levels in the air. The primary exposure to 1,2-DCP associated with showering is from breathing air in the bathroom. It is expected that these steps will also lower the level of EDB and other volatile organic compounds released while showering.

You may already have received a letter and fact sheet from Whatcom County Health and Human Services with more details about this issue. For more information call them at 360/348-1565 or 360/676-6724.

#### Testing your well for EDB and 1,2-DCP

For information about how to have your well tested also call Whatcom County Health and Human Services at the numbers listed above. Further information is also available from the County's Web site at: [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/drinkwat/drinkwa.htm](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/drinkwat/drinkwa.htm)

## For More Information

### *ABOUT EPA'S INVESTIGATION...*

Call EPA, toll-free, at 1 800 424-4EPA and ask to speak with  
Monica Tonel (206) 553-0323 or  
Robert Drake (206) 553-4803

Additional services can be made available by EPA on request to persons with disabilities.

TDD Line . . . . . (206) 553-1698

Visit the EPA Region 10 Internet Home Page at: [HTTP://WWW.EPA.GOV/R10EARTH/R10.HTML](http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/r10.html)

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### *ABOUT...*

- *POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS*
- *MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR EXPOSURE TO EDB OR DCP*
- *INFORMATION ON WELL TESTING*

Call the Whatcom County Health and Human Services Department  
Environmental Health Office(360) 676-6724.

The Whatcom County Health WEB site at:  
[www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/drinkwat/drinkwa.htm](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/drinkwat/drinkwa.htm)  
also has detailed information on the above issues

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### *ABOUT THE BOTTLED WATER PROGRAM...*

Call the Department of Ecology in Bellingham and ask to speak with  
Mary O'Herron 360 738-6246.





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